Flynn guilty plea draws probe closer to Trump

By Eileen Sullivan, Adam Goldman and Michael D. Shear

WASHINGTON — President Trump's former national security adviser, Michael Flynn, pleaded guilty Friday to lying to the FBI about conversations with the Russian ambassador last December, becoming the first senior White House official to pledge cooperation in the special counsel's wide-ranging inquiry of election meddling.

Flynn's pre-inauguration discussions with Sergey Kislyak, the Russian ambassador, were part of a coordinated effort by aides running Trump's transition into the White House to create foreign policy before they were in power, documents released as part of Flynn's plea agreement show. Their efforts undermined the existing policy of President Barack Obama and flouted a warning from a senior Obama administration official to stop meddling in foreign affairs until after the inauguration.

Court documents do not disclose what Trump knew about Flynn's discussions. But in at least one instance, federal prose-

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Brendan Smialowski / AFP / Getty Images

Michael Flynn, President Trump's former national security adviser, leaves court after entering his plea.

San Francisco Chronicle

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STEINLE MURDER TRIAL

Photos by Peter Prato / Special to The Chronicle

Visitors to Pier 14 in San Francisco pass a memorial to Kate Steinle put up at the site of her shooting death.

Why prosecution's case came up short

By Vivian Ho

A jury's near-full acquittal in the Pier 14 killing of Kate Steinle shocked many people who expected a conviction for murder or at least manslaughter. After all, there was no dispute that the accused man held the gun that fired the fatal bullet and that he hurled the weapon into San Francisco Bay as Steinle lay dying.

But the prosecution was, in some ways, fighting uphill from the start, legal experts said Friday, one day after Jose Ines Garcia Zarate was convicted only of a single count of being a felon in possession of a firearm.

"You have to prosecute a case with the evi-

Steinle continues on A9

The memorial, including candles and flowers, was erected Thursday evening by a group calling itself Bay Area Alt Right.

Online extra

▸▸ Exclusive interview with Kate Steinle's family at http://bit.ly/steinle_video

Inside

▸▸ Emotional reactions from both sides to controversial verdict. **A9**

Senate OKs GOP tax bill

Legislation passes with no Democratic support

By Carolyn Lochhead

WASHINGTON — Securing a desperately sought legislative victory for the Trump presidency, the Senate approved a $1.5 trillion tax overhaul Saturday morning that provides massive tax cuts to large corporations and wealthy individuals but could lead to higher tax bills for millions of Californians.

Passage, by a 51-49 vote with no Democratic support, was assured after Republicans rewrote parts of the bill in the final hours to lure GOP holdouts such as Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, who was won over when Senate leaders agreed to allow a $10,000 deduction for property taxes.

Taxes continues on A7

State officials urge charges in PUC probe

By David R. Baker

Two state officials and the mayor of San Bruno have urged California Attorney General Xavier Becerra to file charges in a long-running corruption investigation of the state's utilities commission after suggestions that the agency's lawyers may have tried to obstruct the probe — something the commission denies.

The move comes as October's Wine Country wildfires, which may have been sparked by power lines, have brought fresh scrutiny to the California Public Utilities Commission,

Letter continues on A8

OAKLAND WAREHOUSE FIRE | ONE YEAR LATER

Survivor is learning to walk, talk, eat

By Otis R. Taylor Jr.

STOCKTON — Sam Maxwell's hands shake as he raises a cup of water to his mouth.

Water trickles from the corner of his lips, and he coughs as he swallows.

Ernest Mena, his caretaker, gently pats Sam's back as he leans forward in his wheelchair.

"Cough some more," Ernest says as he wipes Sam's mouth.

"You OK?" Sam's mother, Wendi Maxwell, asks.

"Monday. Tuesday. Wednesday," her son, 33, replies in a gravelly, barely intelligible voice.

▸▸ **Coming Sunday:** A year later, inspection woes and illegal warehouses remain issues.

He recites the days of the week when he has trouble clearing his throat. It helps stop him from gagging.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday — every day is a struggle for a man who, a year ago, went to an electronic music concert at an underground Oakland venue called the Ghost Ship.

Dec. 2, 2016 was a Friday, and Sam felt like dancing that

Survivor continues on A8

Michael Macor / The Chronicle

Sam Maxwell is undergoing a lengthy recovery from injuries suffered in Oakland's Ghost Ship fire a year ago.

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Weather

Partly cloudy. Highs: 56-65. Lows: 36-49. **D4**

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